



AP laserphoto

Stuart Grannen displays some of the items he has salvage from destroyed buildings

Urban archeologists

Salvage companies work to fill the orders from homeowners hankering for artifacts

CHICAGO (AP) — Gargoyles from turn-of-the-century buildings now grimace wickedly in suburban living rooms thanks to urban archeologists who race the wrecking ball to meet rehabbers' growing appetite for artifacts.

About 100 architectural salvage companies around the country are working to fill orders from homeowners hankering for anything from a brass door handle from the old Chicago Stock Exchange building to columns from office buildings designed by the architect Louis Sullivan.

Many of the salvage companies opened within the past decade during a boom in demolition in cities like New York, Baltimore and Chicago.

"These businesses are probably stronger than they've ever been," said Gordon Boch, editor of the *Old House Journal*, a New York-based publication for rehabbers.

"There's an increased sophistication about restoring old houses, greater demand for the product, less of a supply of good quality mantels, stained glass, elaborate doors — things of this nature are harder to find ... than when you had a surplus of demolition of buildings."

To some, these bits of vintage buildings are art. But for many rehabbers, they also ensure architectural integrity.

"People are realizing the value of keeping the old doors ... or the old built-ins to keep consistency with the building," said Annie Steinwedell, manager of Salvage One in Chicago.

Salvage One is considered the grandfather of the

city's architectural salvagers. Its converted warehouse has five stories crammed with 8,000 doors, more than 1,200 fireplace mantels, 1,000 decorative windows and a couple tons of doorknobs, hinges and other vintage hardware.

Prices range from \$35 for an old pine door slathered with layers of cracked paint to \$40,000 for a turn-of-the-century mahogany bar.

At Architectural Artifacts in Chicago, shoppers wade through rows of gargoyles and terra cotta fixtures.

Owner Stuart Grannen opened shop three years ago, aiming to save Sullivan treasures from demolition.

"I just went and introduced myself to every wrecker ... and said, 'When you have a building, please call me,'" Grannen recalled.

When the phone rings, Grannen and assistants rush to the demolition site and remove doors, columns — anything that catches their eye.

Two years ago he bought the rights to an entire downtown block set about to be razed.

"I was up there in the middle of the winter taking huge gargoyles off the buildings," he said.

"It's dangerous, but it's also an incredible amount of fun to dismantle what's been there for 100 years," Grannen said. "If we didn't do it, they'd just knock it into the ground."

It's also lucrative, according to Grannen, who said sales have increased about \$120,000 each year since he started the business.